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Sitting on the Rail

The Westralian Worker's response to wartime issues

Robert Corr

November 2003

*A thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in History at the University of Notre Dame Australia.*

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Abstract

The *Westralian Worker* occupies a privileged place in Western Australia's labour history, as the working class movement's official organ. This study seeks to understand how the paper dealt with its conflicting roles as reflector and projector of labour movement opinion—the observer-agent dichotomy. It does so by analysing the *Worker's* response to some of the major issues facing labour during World War I. The peace movement, anti-German attitudes, the persecution of the IWW, and the conscription debates are considered. It will be argued that the *Worker* attempted to accommodate a wide range of views, but as organised labour's divisions grew deeper, this position became untenable; ultimately the *Westralian Worker* was captured by the anti-conscriptionists.

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